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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PINS, PTER, ELAB, SNAR, KPRP, CO
SUBJECT: PEACE AND WAR IN COLOMBIA

1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT
2. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT BETANCUR'S BOLD EFFORT TO BREAK THE TRADITION OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA HAS LARGELY FAILED. PROSPECTS OVER THE NEXT YEAR ARE FOR ESCALATING VIOLENCE AS THE COLOMBIAN ARMED FORCES (FOLLOWING THE PATTERN OF RECENT MONTHS) CONCENTRATE ON THE M-19, EPL, ELN, AND THE LESSER GUERRILLA GROUPS. THESE IN TURN WILL TRY DESPERATELY TO RECOUP BY BLOODY ACTS OF GUERRILLA THEATER -- LIKE THIS WEEK'S SPECTACULAR ATTACK ON THE PALACE OF JUSTICE. THE COMMUNIST-LED FARC, LARGEST OF THE GUERRILLA ARMIES AND THE ONLY ONE STILL PARTICIPATING IN THE PEACE PROCESS, PREFERS TO TAKE THE LONG VIEW: REMAIN ON THE SIDELINES, BOOST THE CHANCES OF ITS PATRIOTIC UNION (UP) FRONT GROUP, AND PREPARE FOR RESUMING THE BATTLE AFTER THE 1986 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. IF IN THE MEANTIME THE RIVAL GUERRILLA GROUPS HAVE BEEN HEAVILY DAMAGED, THAT WORRIES THE FARC LEADERSHIP NOT AT ALL. A RENEWED, POST-ELECTION GUERRILLA WAR LED BY THE FARC WOULD CONFRONT THE NEW COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT WITH SEVERE CHALLENGES FROM A LARGE, WELL-DISCIPLINED AND WELL-FINANCED ENEMY. WE ARE OPTIMISTIC THAT, BARRING A POPULAR RADICALIZATION THAT SEEMS UNLIKELY, THE GOC WILL BE ABLE TO MEET THESE CHALLENGES.
END SUMMARY
3. A TRADITION OF VIOLENCE: COLOMBIANS HAVE ALWAYS KILLED ONE ANOTHER IN ENORMOUS NUMBERS FOR REASONS POLITICAL, CRIMINAL AND PERSONAL--BUT THE WORST OF THESE HAS BEEN POLITICAL. EVEN BEFORE THE ANARCHIC VIOLENCE OF THE CIVIL WAR KNOWN AS "LA VIOLENCIA" (1948 TO THE LATE 1950'S) HAD ENDED, THE ELEMENTS FOR NEW FIGHTING WERE FORMING. TODAY, AT LEAST FOUR GUERRILLA "ARMIES" ARE IN THE FIELD, AND MANY LESSER GROUPS. THE LARGEST OF TODAY'S GUERRILLA

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ARMIES, THE FARC (ARMED FORCES OF THE COLOMBIAN REVOLUTION), WAS FORMED IN THE 1950'S AS THE ARMED WING OF THE (LEGAL) COMMUNIST PARTY (PCC). MANY OF THE FARC'S TOP LEADERS HAVE BORNE ARMS CONTINUOUSLY FOR THIRTY YEARS. OTHER GROUPS WERE FORMED IN THE 1960'S, INCLUDING THE CASTROITE ELN (ARMY OF NATIONAL LIBERATION) AND THE "MAOIST" EPL (ARMY OF POPULAR LIBERATION). INTERNATIONALLY, THE BEST KNOWN COLOMBIAN GUERRILLA ARMY REMAINS THE M-19, WHICH BEGAN IN 1974 AS THE ARMED WING OF THE RADICAL NATIONALIST ANAPO MOVEMENT, BUT HAS MOVED STEADILY LEFTWARD AS ANAPO ITSELF DECLINED TO INSIGNIFICANCE. SMALLER BANDS OF HOT-EYED GUNMEN LURK ON THE FRINGES OF THE WOULD-BE REVOLUTION, INCLUDING THE ADO (WORKERS' SELF DEFENSE MOVEMENT), THE ORP (PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION), THE PRT (REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS' PARTY), AND THE LITTLE-KNOWN INDIAN GUERRILLA FORCE "QUINTIN LAME."

4. A GROWING THREAT: THE TENDENCY OVER TIME HAS BEEN FOR THE NUMBERS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GUERRILLAS TO INCREASE, DESPITE PERIODIC SUCCESSES BY THE POLICE AND ARMY. THE GOC RECENTLY ESTIMATED THAT THE GUERRILLAS HAVE ABOUT 4,000 FULLY ARMED AND TRAINED TROOPS IN THE FIELD, AND ABOUT DOUBLE THAT NUMBER OF LIGHTLY-ARMED SYMPATHIZERS WHO PARTICIPATE UPON OCCASION. THE FARC, BY ITSELF, ACCOUNTS FOR ABOUT HALF OF THESE FORCES. THE M-19 IS VARIOUSLY ESTIMATED AT ABOUT 1,000 EFFECTIVES, THE EPL AND ELN AT A FEW HUNDRED EACH, AND THE LESSER GROUPS RANGING FROM A FEW DOZEN TO A HUNDRED MEMBERS EACH. BY COMPARISON, THE GOC ARMED FORCES INCLUDE OVER 60,000 MEN, OF WHOM ONLY ABOUT 15,000 ARE READILY DEPLOYABLE ON COUNTER-INSURGENCY MISSIONS.

5. THE PEACE PROCESS: UPON ASSUMING OFFICE IN 1982, PRESIDENT BETANCUR MADE THE ATTAINMENT OF DOMESTIC PEACE THE CENTRAL PUBLIC GOAL OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. HE HAS ATTEMPTED TO ADDRESS POLITICAL VIOLENCE BY TWO PATHS: DIRECTLY, THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GUERRILLAS, AND INDIRECTLY, THROUGH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REFORMS THAT WOULD ULTIMATELY UNDERCUT THE SOCIAL FACTORS THAT ENCOURAGE GUERRILLA VIOLENCE. HE APPOINTED A NATIONAL PEACE COMMISSION IN AUGUST 1982, FOLLOWED UP WITH A GENERAL AMNESTY LAW IN NOVEMBER 1982 (FURTHER BROADENED IN MAY 1985), MET WITH M-19 LEADERS IN MADRID IN 1983, SIGNED CEASE-FIRES WITH ALL MAJOR GROUPS EXCEPT THE ELN DURING MAY-AUGUST 1984, AND EXPANDED THE CEASE-FIRE WITH THE FARC INTO A FORMAL TRUCE IN NOVEMBER

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1984. THE FARC ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR A LEGAL PARTY WITH COMMUNIST SUPPORT, THE PATRIOTIC UNION (UP). M-19 APPEARED INTERESTED IN TAKING THE SAME ROUTE. ALTHOUGH POLITICAL CIRCLES WERE SKEPTICAL FROM THE BEGINNING ABOUT BETANCUR'S CHANCES OF BRINGING HIS PEACE PROCESS TO ANY REAL HARVEST, THE GENERAL PUBLIC RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO BETANCUR'S BASIC ARGUMENT: THAT AFTER MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS OF RISING VIOLENCE, IT WAS TIME TO TRY NEGOTIATION RATHER THAN REPRESSION.

6. THE PEACE PROCESS IN DECLINE: THE HIGH HOPES OF 1984 HAVE WITHERED. ONLY THE FARC REMAINS IN THE PEACE PROCESS. IT IS WIDELY EXPECTED TO CONTEST THE NEXT ELECTIONS THROUGH THE UP FRONT GROUP, BUT EVEN THAT CANNOT BE RELIED UPON. MEANWHILE, M-19 (AUGMENTED BY A BREAK-AWAY RADICAL FACTION OF THE FARC) AND THE REMAINING GUERRILLA ARMIES HAVE ABANDONED THE PEACE PROCESS, INSTEAD PLEDGING TO

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COORDINATE JOINT ATTACKS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. HEAVY FIGHTING HAD RESUMED, ESPECIALLY IN THE CENTRAL ANDEAN DEPARTMENTS OF CAUCA AND VALLE DEL CAUCA, EVEN BEFORE M-19'S RASH ATTACK ON THE PALACE OF JUSTICE. BUT, AS HE MADE CLEAR FOLLOWING THE ATTACK, BETANCUR HAS NOT ABANDONED THE SEARCH FOR DOMESTIC PEACE. IT APPEARS THAT HE WILL TRY TO CLING TO A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE FARC AND THE OTHERS, AND WILL THUS SEEK TO EXTEND THE TRUCE WITH THE FARC FOR A SECOND YEAR BEGINNING DECEMBER 1.

7. BASIC CONTRADICTIONS: THE GOC SAW THE PEACE PROCESS AS A MEANS TO RESTORE DOMESTIC PEACE BY OFFERING THE GUERRILLAS A PLACE (ALMOST CERTAINLY MODEST) IN THE EXISTING NATIONAL SYSTEM. A REFORMIST MENU OF POLITICAL CHANGES AND RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT, PLUS PERSONAL INDUCEMENTS LIKE JOBS, EDUCATION, AND SMALL BUSINESS LOANS, WERE EXPECTED TO ATTRACT THEM. THE MODEL FOR THIS EFFORT IS THE VENEZUELAN EXPERIENCE OF THE 1960'S. THE GUERRILLAS HOPED TO PRESSURE THE GOC INTO MUCH MORE EXTENSIVE CHANGES, LEADING SOONER OR LATER TO A RADICAL GOVERNMENT. THE CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THESE POSITIONS WERE PROFOUND. MAKING MATTERS WORSE, NEITHER SIDE COULD DELIVER ON EVEN MINIMUM DEMANDS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL IN OBTAINING MODEST POLITICAL REFORMS. ALTHOUGH THE CONGRESS MAY ULTIMATELY APPROVE POPULAR ELECTION OF MAYORS (BUT NOT BEGINNING UNTIL 1988), OTHER CHANGES SUCH AS PUBLIC FINANCING OF ELECTIONS REMAIN STALLED. MEANWHILE, THE ECONOMIC CRISIS HAS SEVERELY RESTRICTED EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH THE UNDERLYING SOCIAL CAUSES OF UNREST. FOR THEIR PART, MOST GUERRILLA FORCES ARE WILDLY INDIVIDUALISTIC. LEADERSHIP IS OFTEN IN DISPUTE, AND VULNERABLE TO SELLOUT CHARGES. HENCE, SETTling FOR HALF A LOAF IS DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS. IDEOLOGICAL CONVICTIONS RUN DEEP, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE LEADERS. FURTHERMORE, MANY GUERRILLAS ENTER THAT LIFE FOR REASONS SIMILAR TO THOSE WHICH DRAW CONTEMPORARIES INTO THE NARCO MAFIA: A TASTE FOR VIOLENCE AND A RUTHLESS DRIVE FOR PERSONAL POWER. CITY COUNCILMEN AND VILLAGE MAYORS ARE NOT MADE FROM SUCH AS THESE.

8. M-19 IN DECLINE: IN THE CASE OF M-19, THESE ENDEMIC PROBLEMS WERE WORSENERED BY THE DEATHS OF CO-FOUNDERS JAIME BATEMAN (IN A 1983 PLANE CRASH) AND CARLOS TOLEDO PLATA (IN A 1984 ASSASSINATION). THEIR DEATHS REMOVED THE FIGURES MOST CAPABLE OF ATTRACTING POPULAR SUPPORT IF M-19 HAD CHOSEN TO CREATE A PARTY AND CONTEST THE ELECTIONS, AS IT BRIEFLY APPEARED LIKELY TO DO. LEADERSHIP WAS THROWN INTO THE HANDS OF YOUTHFUL HARD-LINERS. WHILE PRETENDING TO SUPPORT THE PEACE PROCESS, M-19 BEGAN CONCENTRATING ITS FORCES IN LATE 1984 INTO THE MOUNTAINOUS DISTRICTS OF CAUCA, VALLE DEL CAUCA, TOLIMA, AND QUINDIO. TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE CONFUSION CREATED BY THE COMMUNIST-LED GENERAL STRIKE IN JUNE 1985 M-19 LEADERS WENT UNDERGROUND AND FORMALLY ABANDONED THE PEACE PROCESS. THEIR EXAMPLE WAS FOLLOWED BY THE EPL AND THE SMALLER GUERRILL GROUPS. WITH THEIR ACTIVE HELP, M-19 SEIZED SEVERAL SMALL MOUNTAIN TOWNS AND INITIATED LARGE SCALE ATTACKS (INVOLVING FORCES OF UP TO 300 MEN) ON POLICE AND ARMY UNITS.

9. M-19'S JUDGMENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOMENT PROVED DISASTROUSLY WRONG. THEY ACHIEVED ONLY BLAME FOR BREAKING THE PEACE, AND A SAVAGE ARMY COUNTER-

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1984. THE FARC ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR A LEGAL PARTY WITH ATTACK THAT SMASHED THEIR MOUNTAIN REDOUBTS AND DROVE THE SURVIVORS INTO FLIGHT. THE POPULAR PRESTIGE OF M-19 HAS PLUMMETED AND PUBLIC ANGER AT THE PALACE OF JUSTICE ATTACK CAN ONLY WORSEN THEIR PROBLEMS. COMANDANTE ALONSO'S LAME APOLOGIA IN A NOVEMBER 10 PRESS CONFERENCE, THAT M-19 WOULD NOT HAVE ATTACKED THE PALACE OF JUSTICE HAD THEY KNOWN THE GOVERNMENT WOULD REACT SO HARSHLY, FOLLOWED BY THE REMARK THAT FURTHER M-19 ATTACKS ARE PLANNED, CONFOUNDS BELIEF. TWO YEARS AGO M-19 HAD SOME OF THE QUALITIES OF A POPULAR MOVEMENT. TODAY, IT IS ALMOST UNIVERSALLY PERCEIVED AS A BAND OF MURDEROUS THUGS. BY CONFRONTING M-19 WITH DIFFICULT POLITICAL CHOICES AND EXPOSING ITS TRUE NATURE, THE PEACE PROCESS HAS HELPED TO BRING ABOUT ITS DECLINE.

10. REVOLUTION WITHOUT ADVENTURE: ONLY THE FARC HAS PROVEN TO BE WELL-DISCIPLINED ENOUGH, CONFIDENT ENOUGH, AND STRONG ENOUGH TO TAKE THE LONG VIEW. ULTIMATELY, THE FARC'S LEADERS WANT WHAT THE LEADERS OF ALL THE OTHER GUERRILLA FORCES WANT -- A MARXIST-LENINIST COLOMBIA, LED BY THEMSELVES. BUT IF IT LACKS THE REVOLUTIONARY BRAVURA THAT MIGHT (IMPROBABLY) HAVE ENABLED THE M-19 TO MAKE A REVOLUTION QUICKLY, THE FARC IS FAR BETTER PREPARED TO SURVIVE IN THE INTERIM, WHILE WAITING FOR THE LONG-DEFERRED DAY. THE FARC IS COHERENT AND NOT (A DREADED INSULT IN LENINIST CIRCLES) "ADVENTURIST." TOP FARC LEADERS ARE COVERTLY MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCC) CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND OBSERVE PCC DISCIPLINE. THE PCC ALSO CONTROLS THE COUNTRY'S SECOND LARGEST LABOR UNION. CONSCIOUS OF PROGRESS ON BOTH THE LABOR AND MILITARY FRONTS, NEITHER THE PCC NOR THE FARC ITSELF NEEDS TO HURRY. THE PCC'S CONNECTION TO THE SOVIET EMBASSY IS SHADOWY BUT UNQUESTIONED -- AND THE SOVIETS TRADITIONALLY MANAGE THE LATIN CP'S FOR THEIR LONG-TERM NUISANCE VALUE TO THE USG, AND ONLY RARELY FOR A REVOLUTIONARY EFFORT THAT MIGHT FAIL.

11. THE FARC BUILDS ITS STRENGTH: THE FARC, ALONE OF THE GUERRILLA ARMIES, REGULARLY OPERATES NATION-WIDE. THE FARC ALONE HAS SOLID TERRITORIAL BASES, RUNNING FROM THE MOUNTAINS OF HUILA AND TOLIMA, THROUGH CAUCA, TO THE SOUTHERN "LLANOS" OF CAQUETA, PUTOMAYO, AND GUAVIARE. FINALLY, THE FARC HAS THE LARGEST AND MOST SECURE FINANCING OF ALL THE GUERRILLA FORCES. WE BELIEVE THAT ALL THE GUERRILLA FORCES WILL TAKE NARCO MONEY UPON OCCASION -- BUT THE FARC TAKES THE MOST. MORE THAN HALF THE FARC'S 20-PLUS REGIONAL FRONTS OPERATE IN RURAL AREAS OF INTENSE NARCO MAFIA ACTIVITY. AT LEAST SINCE THE EARLY 1980'S, THE FARC HAS LEVIED TAXES AND PROVIDED PROTECTION TO NARCO FIELDS AND LABORATORIES. ITS INCOME FROM THIS SOURCE HAS BEEN CREDIBLY ESTIMATED AT OVER \$100 MILLION ANNUALLY, AND PERHAPS CONSIDERABLY MORE. (THE TOTAL GOC DEFENSE BUDGET FOR 1985 IS \$190 MILLION). BEARING ALL THESE POSITIVE LONG-TERM FACTORS IN MIND, IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THE FARC'S AGING LEADERS FEEL THEY CAN TAKE THE CHANCE OF LEK SWOXAIVES AND BADLY ON THE GOVERNMENT.

12. ENEMIES ON THE LEFT: WE DOUBT THAT THE FARC LEADERSHIP FEELS ANY UNEASE AT THE COLOMBIAN ARMY'S CURRENT OPERATIONS AGAINST THE M-19, EPL, ELN, AND LESSER GROUPS. IF EVENTUALLY OBLIGED TO RENEW THE BATTLE, THE FARC AND PCC WOULD PREFER TO DO SO AS UNQUESTIONED LEADERS OF THE LEFT. TO THE EXTENT THAT OTHER GROUPS STILL HAVE SIGNIFICANT FORCES IN THE FIELD, THAT LEADERSHIP MIGHT BE QUESTIONED. LET THE ARMY HAVE THEM! THERE ARE PRECEDENTS FOR SUCH A STAND:

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IN 1980-81, THE FARC AND THE M-19 HAD A WORKING ARRANGEMENT FOR COOPERATION IN THE SOUTHERN ANDEAN REGION. THE FARC WITHDREW FROM THE ALLIANCE AND ANNOUNCED A UNILATERAL CEASE-FIRE IN LATE 1981, WHICH (PERHAPS NOT BY ACCIDENT) CLEARED THE WAY FOR ARMY OPERATIONS AGAINST THE M-19. REACTION TO THE PALACE OF JUSTICE ATTACK HAS CONFIRMED THE FARC IN THE POLICY.

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1984. THE FARC ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR A LEGAL PARTY WITH OF STRESSING ITS DIFFERENCES WITH THE M-19, TO THE POINT OF PUBLICLY CONDEMNING THE M-19 ACTION AS A "STUPID AND USELESS GENOCIDE." AS FOR THE LESSER GROUPS, THEY MAY CLIMB INTO THE PIT THAT M-19 HAS DUG FOR ITSELF, OR MAY ALSO MOVE TO DIFFERENTIATE THEMSELVES.

13. NOT ALL SMOOTH SAILING: THE FARC'S SCENARIO FOR THE NEXT YEAR, EVEN IF WE READ IT CORRECTLY, MAY NOT PLAY OUT AS THEY EXPECT. SOME INCIDENT MAY PUSH THEM BACK INTO ARMED CONFLICT WILLYNILLY. FURTHERMORE, ALTHOUGH BETANCUR HAS MUCH INVESTED IN KEEPING THE FARC IN THE PEACE PROCESS, HE HAS ALSO STRESSED THROUGHOUT THAT GROUPS COULD NOT BE SIMULTANEOUSLY GUERRILLA ARMIES AND LEGITIMATE PARTIES. THE FARC HAS NOT DISARMED, AND STILL DEFENDS ITS BASE AREAS FROM ALL INTRUSIONS. IF THE PRESIDENT WANTS TO SLIDE OVER THIS INCONVENIENT FACT, WAYS CAN BE FOUND. BUT WITH ANGER RISING IN THE CONGRESS AND THE PRESS AGAINST HIGH PROBABILITY OF FARC "ARMED PROSELYTIZING" IN THE ELECTIONS, BETANCUR MAY DEMAND AT LEAST PARTIAL DISARMAMENT. HIS POSITION MAY DEPEND ON JUST HOW THE POPULAR REACTION TO THE PALACE ATTACK DEVELOPS IN THE WEEKS AHEAD. IF BETANCUR UNEXPECTEDLY TURNS HARD-LINE, THE FARC MAY RESUME ARMED OPERATIONS AND LEAVE THE PEACE PROCESS SOONER THAN NOW PROJECTED.

14. LOOKING AHEAD: HOW WELL CAN THE COLOMBIAN DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM AND ARMED FORCES DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS THEY WILL FACE, IMMEDIATELY FROM M-19 AND NEXT SUMMER (IN ALL LIKELIHOOD) FROM THE FARC? PRETTY WELL, WE CONCLUDE. THE ARMED FORCES ARE VERY SHORT ON MOBILITY AND LONG-RANGE FIRE POWER, ESPECIALLY HELICOPTERS AND ATTACK AIRCRAFT. PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THESE WEAKNESSES -- WHICH ARE NOT NEW -- THE GOC HAS LEARNED TO MANAGE WITH LOW-TECH INFANTRY ATTACKS AND GOOD INTELLIGENCE. MANY OF THE RURAL AREAS DOMINATED BY THE GUERRILLAS ARE SPARSELY INHABITED AND OF LITTLE ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE (ALTHOUGH THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS, INCLUDING THE CAUCA VALLEY). THE PEOPLE AND THE ECONOMY ARE PREDOMINATELY URBAN. THE COLOMBIAN POLICE AND ARMY HAVE DEMONSTRATED REPEATEDLY OVER THE LAST DECADE THAT, WHILE THEY CANNOT PREVENT A HIGH LEVEL OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS, THEY CAN ROLL UP AND DESTROY ANY SERIOUS URBAN GUERRILLA FORCES. IT IS NECESSITY, NOT CHOICE, THAT HAS DRIVEN THE GUERRILLAS TO SEEK RURAL ENCLAVES. FROM THOSE ENCLAVES, THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO BE COMPLETELY DRIVEN IN ANY REASONABLE TIME. BUT TO REACH BEYOND THOSE ENCLAVES IN A SERIOUS WAY WOULD REQUIRE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS THAT THE GUERRILLAS DO NOT HAVE AND SHOW NO PROSPECT OF ACQUIRING -- MOST SIGNALLY, WIDESPREAD POPULAR SUPPORT. THE PCC HAS NEVER TAKEN MORE THAN THREE PERCENT IN A NATIONAL ELECTION, AND THE UP (EVEN BY CLOUDING ITS PCC HERITAGE) WOULD DO WELL TO TAKE FIVE. THE POPULAR ATTITUDES THAT UNDERLY THESE FIGURES MIGHT CHANGE: A FURTHER SEVERE ECONOMIC DETERIORATION MIGHT DO IT, OR HEAVY-HANDED REPRESSION BY A NEW COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT. BUT UNTIL

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THEN, WE ANTICIPATE MORE OF THE RECENT PAST: BLOODY ACTS OF GUERRILLA THEATER, VERY UNPLEASANT TO THE VICTIMS (WHICH MIGHT INCLUDE THIS EMBASSY), BUT NOT CALLING INTO QUESTION THE SURVIVAL OF THE COLOMBIAN STATE OR ITS DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM.

15. DATT COMMENT: WHILE THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY HAS SO FAR BEEN ABLE TO MANAGE WITH LOW-TECH INFANTRY TACTICS, A BATTLE AGAINST THE FARC IS ANOTHER MATTER. THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY IS DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR ABILITY TO MEET THE FARC CHALLENGE UNDER THEIR CURRENT BUDGET RESTRAINTS. THIS CONCERN IS BEHIND THEIR OFTEN-STATED REQUEST THAT THE U.S. HELP THEM NOW RATHER THAN WAITING UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE WHEN THE SITUATION REACHES A CRISIS. END COMMENT
GILLESPIE

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